

The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111321
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	378276
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Burgess
Headteacher	Christine Smith
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons and observed six teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with members of the governing body, local authority representatives, staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' progress and attainment data, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They also looked at samples of pupils' work collected over the last school year and in the current term. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 12 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils and staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether pupils' rate of progress is improving securely and quickly enough.
- Whether provision is effective enough to support rapid improvement in English and mathematics.
- Whether actions are planned and implemented with sufficient effectiveness to support a rapid pace of whole-school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. Most pupils are White British, with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. The headteacher, who was acting headteacher at the time of the school's last inspection, was appointed in June 2011.

During the period since its last inspection, the school has experienced significant staffing turbulence, related to teachers' long-term sickness absences; these issues are now resolved and staffing arrangements are stable.

An independent company offers pre-school provision in an adjacent building on the school site. This provision is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted and the report is available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Overall, children enter school with skills that are below the expected levels for their age. Staff are caring and children settle in happily. The school promotes their personal development well: behaviour is good, relationships are positive and supportive and pupils, who attend regularly, say they enjoy coming to school. However, pupils' progress in establishing skills in reading, writing and mathematics is too slow and they fail to make the gains in learning expected of them. This, combined with their low attainment, results in achievement that is inadequate. They make a slow start in the Reception class and the school has not been able to speed learning up sufficiently in Key Stages 1 and 2. Consequently, despite some recent improvements in provision, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been below nationally expected levels for a number of years and has been very low for the past two years. This means that pupils are not prepared adequately for the next stages in their education. Although pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported, cared for and included, their learning and progress are also inadequate. Attendance is below average and showing no signs of improvement. This is mainly because the school's work with identified families to improve their children's attendance has been ineffective.

The quality of teaching is uneven across the school. It is considerably more effective in Years 5 and 6 than elsewhere, but is inadequate overall. Monitoring is carried out regularly, but it has not been successful in identifying and tackling less effective practice. Inadequate practice is particularly evident in pupils' books in a number of year groups, where marking is not supportive enough and where there is little evidence of progress. Work is under way to raise the quality of the curriculum but this has yet to impact sufficiently on improving outcomes for pupils in English and mathematics. Provision in the Reception class is inadequate and does not focus sharply enough on promoting the rapid acquisition of early literacy and numeracy skills, although it provides well for children's welfare and social needs.

Self-evaluation is not accurate. Since the previous inspection, a new system has been introduced to ensure regular and ongoing assessment and to track pupils' progress through the year. This is not being used effectively because the expectations against which progress is measured are not high enough. As a result, leaders' appraisal of how well the school is doing is unrealistic. The governing body's capacity to hold the school to account has been restricted, as it has not been given enough information about pupils' progress. The school development plan lacks sufficient focus on bringing about improvements in learning and the success criteria identified are not precise enough. For all of these reasons, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate the progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by:
 - setting out appropriately challenging and ambitious expectations for pupils' progress and attainment
 - ensuring, through rigorous and effective monitoring, that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better and that learning is supported by an appropriate pace in all lessons
 - ensuring that the curriculum is designed effectively to support rapid improvements in pupils' basic skills
 - improving consistency in the quality of marking, so that it always gives pupils clear guidance on the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

- Raise attainment and improve the progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that provision in the Reception class is sharply focused on learning.

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of strategic planning for improvement, by defining precise success criteria in the school development plan, so that the impact of actions can be measured accurately to provide an overview of the school's performance.

- Improve pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They usually show interest in their work; they enjoy working with a partner or in a group and older pupils, especially, offer their ideas with growing confidence. In most lessons, pupils listen carefully to instructions and try diligently to do their best work.

Pupils' overall achievement is inadequate. Assessment data for the last school year, together with evidence seen in lessons and in pupils' current work, all show that attainment across the school is low and that pupils are making poor progress overall. Pupils in the current Years 5 and 6 are working below expected levels for their age; progress in these classes is more rapid than elsewhere in the school as a result of

more effective teaching. There are some early signs that attainment has started to rise in Year 6. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make inadequate progress in relation to their abilities and starting points.

Pupils show a good understanding of issues of personal safety. They form good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are confident help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Pupils, parents and carers agree that school is a place of safety. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and they participate enthusiastically in the activities provided to support their health, fitness and well-being. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as members of the school council. All of this contributes to preparing them for the future, but the low levels of their basic skills mean that, overall, they are not sufficiently prepared for the academic challenges they will meet in secondary school. Pupils show a good understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in their good behaviour and considerate attitudes. Attendance is below average and this is a barrier to learning and progress for a significant minority of pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching is inadequate because too many pupils are not learning enough and make inadequate progress. In most of the lessons observed during the inspection, the pace of learning was slow. This meant that progress was not as rapid as it might otherwise have been. Work in pupils' books in most year groups was often of a low standard, untidy, poorly marked and with very little evidence of progress taking place. Higher quality provision was seen in Years 5 and 6; teaching was of better quality in these classes. Books were neatly presented with more effective marking and guidance, and evidence of some good or better progress was apparent.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Recent improvements in the school’s assessment systems mean that class teachers now have a clearer overview of pupils’ progress. Assessment is not used effectively enough across the school and fails to identify pupils who are underachieving or to prompt speedy action to raise their attainment. Teaching assistants often make a valuable contribution to pupils’ learning, especially for those pupils who have additional needs. Improved organisation of phonic (the sounds words make) teaching across the school was introduced at the start of the current year but this has yet to show sufficient impact on pupils’ achievement. A new topic-based approach is beginning to capture pupils’ interests more and is starting to help them to become engaged in learning. Despite these positive features, the curriculum is inadequate overall, because it does not contribute effectively to improved outcomes in learning and progress in English and mathematics for pupils across the school.

Pastoral care is effective. The school supports potentially vulnerable pupils and their families sensitively. Attendance and punctuality are promoted through a range of actions. The school is working in partnership with the local authority and external agencies to address issues for families and pupils at risk of very low attendance, although with limited success. Good links with the associated secondary school benefit pupils at transition time; partnership with the on-site pre-school provision contributes well to children’s induction into the Reception class. The school collaborates with a range of agencies that support pupils’ health, welfare, social and learning needs. Academic support is less effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are not taking effective steps to embed their ambition for the school and, as a result, the rate of improvement is too slow. Some initiatives have been implemented recently. For example, subject leaders are working together to plan the school’s new creative curriculum. So far, such developments are appropriately matched to pupils’ needs, but there has not been time for them to impact on learning and progress. The school development plan is not sufficiently strategic; success criteria are not defined with precision and this reduces leaders’ ability to assess exactly how well the school is doing. The quality of teaching is uneven across the school, because monitoring is not rigorous and ineffective practice has not been challenged. Progress meetings are held each term to review how well pupils are doing in reading, writing and mathematics. However, because expectations for progress have been set too low, the reviews are not helping the school to identify readily and quickly provide support for pupils who may be underachieving. The supportive governing body has not been able to make sufficient impact on the direction and work of the school because governors do not have a clear enough overview of pupils’ progress to hold leaders to account robustly.

Parents and carers appreciate the school’s support for their children’s welfare. The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection through well-managed procedures and ongoing review of their effectiveness. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion through a range of partnerships and activities in the community and with the church and the parish. The school’s promotion of equality of opportunity and access to educational entitlement is inadequate, because insufficient action has been taken to bring about improvement in outcomes for the various groups of pupils in school. This includes children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make inadequate progress in the Reception class, so that by the end of the year their skills are considerably below expected levels for their age across the areas of learning, especially in literacy and numeracy. Provision is inadequate because it is not sufficiently focused on establishing literacy and numeracy skills. Its strengths are in promoting children’s personal, social and emotional development and, because of this, children develop positive attitudes to school and enjoy taking part in class activities. Assessment is informed by evidence gathered through observations of the children in their activities and staff review this information regularly. Despite this positive practice, they are not using the information they gain from assessment well enough to ensure that the children progress rapidly in literacy and numeracy.

Procedures to ensure children’s welfare meet all requirements. Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff. As a result, they grow in confidence and they are happy and secure. They settle quickly because induction procedures are sensitive and the staff establish positive relationships with parents and carers. The learning environment is bright, attractive and well-resourced, both indoors and out. Children are provided with an appropriate balance between activities they choose for themselves and those led by adults. Expectations are not high enough, however, and more-able children, in particular, are not always challenged sufficiently by the activities that are provided for them. Leaders are insufficiently focused on improving learning outcomes for the children.

Provision is monitored regularly, but this has not brought about sufficient improvement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. All of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children’s experience at the school. A time was set aside during the inspection for parents or carers to come into school to meet with a member of the inspection team, but no parents or carers attended.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 109 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	83	1	8	1	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	75	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	75	2	17	1	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	67	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	58	4	33	0	0	1	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	50	6	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	67	3	25	1	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 2NL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we inspected your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. I'm sorry to tell you that we found that the school is not as effective as it should be. We found a number of positive things and I'm going to tell you about some of those first. You are well behaved and polite young people. You usually work hard in your lessons and you get on well with each other and with the adults in school. You told us you feel safe and well cared for in school and we could see that the school looks after you well.

We were concerned about your attainment and progress in learning. We think that the school could help you to do much better. For this reason, we have decided that your school needs 'special measures'. This means your school will be given some extra support and inspectors will visit to check how well things are improving. We have given the school's leaders a list of the things we think they need to do to make the school much more effective.

- Improve your attainment and speed up your progress by having high expectations of what you can achieve.
- Make sure you are always taught well and the curriculum is well-matched to your needs.
- Make sure teachers give you good advice when they mark your work.
- Improve attainment and speed up the progress of children in the Reception class, especially in literacy and numeracy.
- Improve the big plan that they make for the school each year by putting more detail in it about how they are going to measure how well the school is doing.
- Improve attendance, so that no-one misses out on learning.

You can help by continuing to be happy learners, by always doing your best and by making sure all of you attend school regularly.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton
Lead inspector

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